

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY,  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS  
CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN**



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**Technology Subcommittee to Examine  
Results of 2004 Overseas Census Test**

*How Can We Accurately Count Americans Living Abroad?*

**What: Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the  
Census Subcommittee oversight hearing:  
“Lessons Learned from the 2004 Overseas Census Test”**

**When: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2004, 2:00 p.m.**

**Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

**Background:**

The purpose of this hearing is to examine the results of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2004 Overseas Census Test and to review the GAO’s report titled, “2010 Census: Counting Americans Overseas as Part of the Decennial Census Would Not Be Cost-Effective.” The Subcommittee will also review the important lessons learned and the preliminary findings from the ongoing evaluation by the Bureau and hear from some census stakeholders with relevant perspectives on the test and its challenges.

The U.S. Constitution requires a count of its population every 10 years. The count determines the number of apportioned seats that a state gets to send to the House, the number of voting districts, and also the allocation of hundreds of billions of federal dollars. Since the first decennial census in 1790, the concept of “usual residence” has been used. Usual residence generally means that people are counted where they live most of the time, and not necessarily the same as voting or legal residence. Also, non-citizens living in the United States are included in the count, regardless of their

immigration status. Many overseas Americans have long recognized the importance of participating in the census as part of their civic duty. Some pay taxes, vote, may have families back at home, while others may be overseas for a short period of time.

With the challenges already faced by the Bureau to secure a successful stateside count in 2010, having to also count private American citizens living abroad adds another large challenge, and a great deal of expense. There is no reliable estimate of the overseas population. There is no master address file or control list. It is impossible for the Census Bureau to attempt to enumerate Americans living overseas without a better estimate of the population. Counting Americans abroad as an integral part of the Census would be monumental task that would introduce new resource demands, risks, and uncertainties to an endeavor that was already facing a variety of difficulties. It would stretch the Bureau's resources, and thus detract from domestic efforts.

Congress has been responsive to the needs of these stakeholders by meeting with them and also passing legislation to direct the Census Bureau to take action. Additionally, Congress appropriated money to the Census Bureau to carry out the voluntary overseas census test. The Census Bureau estimates that it will have spent \$7.8 million over three years for this test. Unfortunately, the participation was remarkably low. Only 5,390 responses were received from the three test sites. The Census Bureau was hopeful in sending out 520,000 census forms and was greatly disappointed considering that such small fraction was returned. GAO estimates that it cost \$1,450 per response. That is a gross expense compared to the \$56 per household cost in the 2000 Census.

## **WITNESSES**

### **Panel One:**

**Mr. Charles Louis Kincannon**, Director, U.S. Census Bureau

**Ms. Patricia Dalton**, U.S. Government Accountability Office

### **Panel Two:**

**Mr. L. Leigh Gribble**, Vice Chair, American Business Council of the Gulf Countries

**Ms. Lucy Laederich**, U.S. Liaison, Federation of American Women's Club Overseas, Inc.

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